

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1-28 (canceled)

29. (previously presented) A method for facilitating distribution of coupons for use at at least one store, comprising:

 creating a targeted coupon by at least one coupon associate taken from a group of coupon associates consisting of: a particular store; a chain store; a customer environment sensor; a weather sensor; a product manufacturer; a product manufacturer; a service provider; a government agency; a first user; at least one other user; an employer of a first user; a third party agent; a software agent; and any combination of these associates;

 providing a coupon device to a first user, from one of a group of coupon providers consisting of: the Coupon Service Bureau; said at least one store; a product manufacturer; a service provider; a government agency; a family member; an employer of said first user;

 said first user employing the coupon device, comprising a device taken from a group of devices consisting of: a handheld device; a computing device; a smart card; a PDA; and a cell phone; and any combination of

these devices, to make a request to a coupon service bureau to obtain a targeted coupon for a targeted advantage, wherein the targeted advantage is taken from a group of targeted advantages consisting of: product discount; service discount; duration of discount; rebate; service feature; service contract feature; product feature; ecological feature; safety feature; preferred instructions; an independent software agent; and any combination of these advantages; and

a coupon service bureau performing steps of:

forwarding said targeted coupon to said first user;

metering at least one of quantity of user requests, nature of user requests, quantity of coupon service bureau forwardings, and nature of coupon service bureau forwardings; and

billing at least one of said first user or a coupon associate according to the number and nature of requests or forwardings;

and wherein said coupon service bureau performs at least one of the following additional steps:

modifying said targeted coupon based on a coupon-modifying criterion taken from a group of criteria consisting of: expiration date; number of other users

using targeted coupons; current weather; predicted weather; news reports; movies; movie show times; user's buying history; stores record of sales; time of day; number of sales for that day; speed at which product is selling; prevailing market conditions; geopolitical events; fuel prices; demographic information; traffic patterns; gas prices; prevailing economic conditions; number of people in store at the moment or predicted to be in the store; time of day; terrorist alert level; nature of stores along the way to destination store; historical record of traffic problems; historical record of accidents; crime statistics; and any combination of these criteria; deleting the targeted coupon; graphically modifying the targeted coupon; changing the targeted coupon value; and moving the targeted coupon from one location to another.

30. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 29, further comprising obtaining user-specific information from said first user, wherein the user-specific information includes at least one piece of information taken from a group of information comprising: first user demographic

information; time of day of the step of making; time of day of the step of employing; product information; rate of purchases in a given time for a given product or products; and user's age; gender; income; place of residence; marital status; number of family members; past buying habits; level of education; hobbies; race; religion; and any combination of these pieces of information.

31. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 29, further comprising said first user employing said coupon to obtain said targeted advantage at at least one store.

32. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 29, further comprising a further step taken from a group of further steps consisting of:

at least one associate from said group of coupon associates monitoring and storing usage of said targeted coupon;

at least one coupon associate receiving targeted coupon use data from at least one other coupon associate from said group of targeted coupon associates;

said at least one coupon associate redeeming said targeted coupon after use of said targeted coupon by said first user; and

one of said at least one coupon associate providing an identifier enabling use of said targeted coupon by a limited user population.

33. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 29, wherein the step of forwarding includes at least one of: requiring a return of a previous coupon from said first user to the Coupon Service Bureau, and another user providing said targeted coupon to said Coupon Service Bureau in exchange for a previous coupon held by said first user.

34. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 29, wherein a coupon exchange provided by said computer service bureau permits user exchange of coupons, said exchange comprising one of barter, sale, auction, and any combination of these techniques.

35. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 34, wherein the electronic exchange is restricted by a restriction taken from a group of restrictions consisting of: time limitations, location of a store limitations, location of exchangers of electronic coupons limitations, product limitations, and price limitations.

